

Testimony for Environmental Regulation Committee May 3, 2000 Regarding Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Presented by Texas Radiation Advisory Board

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Recommendation on Low-Level Radioactive Waste Passed by the Texas Radiation Advisory Board, April 15, 2000

The Bureau of Radiation Control asked the Texas Radiation Advisory Board for guidance on the length of time a license should be granted for the storage of low-level radioactive waste. The length of time a license should be granted is a complicated issue since any answer to this question involves policy as well as technical issues. This document contains the key issues and action items the Texas Radiation Advisory Board recommends. A major dilemma for the State of Texas is whether or not the low-level radioactive waste site in Barnwell, South Carolina, remains available. Most available information indicates that the time Barnwell will remain open to low-level radioactive waste from Texas or its compact states is limited.

Background

The permanent disposal of low-level radioactive wastes is complicated, and a permanent nationwide solution does not exist. These low-level radioactive waste issues have remained unsolved even though the U.S. Congress took action in 1982 to establish a process whereby each state would address the low-level radioactive waste to be permanently disposed from their state. The following list describes the main points the Texas Radiation Advisory Board believes should be followed as the State of Texas moves forward to solve the low-level radioactive waste issues for its citizens.

- 1. The State of Texas needs a solution to the low-level radioactive waste disposal question.
- 2. The State of Texas should take title to the low-level radioactive waste and should hold the license for the low-level radioactive waste facility.
- 3. The low-level radioactive waste facility should be operated by a private company. Financial assurance should be provided so that the State of Texas and the original generators will not have any future financial liability.
- 4. The low-level radioactive waste facility should be located in an area which meets current siting requirements.
- 5. The State of Texas should pursue Assured Isolation as one of the options for addressing the needs of the State of Texas and for the Texas, Maine, and Vermont Low-level Radioactive Waste Compact.
- 6. There should be only one low-level radioactive waste storage/disposal site for the State of Texas, not multiple sites.
- 7. The State of Texas should consider a site where the local public is supportive and should be proactive in providing the local public with factual information so the local population can make an informed decision.

Specific Action/Recommendation for Bureau of Radiation Control regarding the length of time low-level radioactive waste may be stored/processed prior to disposal.

While the Texas Radiation Advisory Board feels strongly that Assured Isolation should be pursued as an option for the State of Texas, we do not believed the Texas Legislature envisioned Bureau of Radiation Control to grant a storage license for several hundred years. Therefore, Texas Radiation Advisory Board recommends that Bureau of Radiation Control use a term of 160 years for the design life of the facility with the appropriate specifications for continuing compliance inspections and license renewals. Texas Radiation Advisory Board anticipates the upcoming legislature will address the following questions:

- 1. Does Assured Isolation satisfy the requirement of the Texas, Maine, and Vermont compact?
- 2. Will a low-level radioactive waste license (either Assured Isolation or permanent disposal) be held by the State of Texas or by a private company?
- 3. Will the Bureau of Radiation Control or the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission license the low-level radioactive waste facility (either Assured Isolation or permanent disposal)?